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Report of the Commission on Human Settlements on the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 7 of its resolution 43/181 of 20 December 1988, requested the Commission on Human Settlements, as the body designated to coordinate the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000,[1] to report biennially to the Assembly on progress made in its implementation. In accordance with the above resolution, the Commission submitted its reports to the Assembly at its forty-fourth, forty-sixth, forty-eighth and fiftieth sessions.[2] The present, fifth report on the subject covers the period from May 1995 until the conclusion of the Commission's sixteenth session in May 1997.

2. The objective of the Global Strategy for Shelter is to facilitate adequate shelter for all by the year 2000. The operational focus of the Strategy is on national action, and the Strategy contains extensive guidelines for the consideration of Governments to define the roles of the public, private, non-governmental and community sectors in the delivery of shelter and services within an enabling framework. The Habitat Agenda[3] which was adopted by the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) contained, in chapter III.A, entitled "Adequate shelter for all", a series of commitments made by Governments for the attainment of that objective.

3. The present report is a brief overview of the action taken by Governments to put enabling shelter strategies into effect. During the preparatory process for Habitat II, the urban and housing indicators were applied in some 113 countries. The data obtained form a basis to be used for assessing the impact of the new or revised shelter strategies. The implementation of the Strategy has been guided by succeeding plans of action, and the plan of action for the period 1998-1999 is contained in the annex to the present report. The plan of action is brief and is linked directly to the Habitat Agenda.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR SHELTER TO THE YEAR 2000

A. Action taken by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

4. During the period 1995-1996, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), in its role as the secretariat of Habitat II, integrated its activities in the preparatory process for the Conference with its role as the coordinating agency for the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter. In these roles, it focused on providing assistance to countries for the application of the urban and housing indicators, the preparation of the national plans of action and mobilizing the large variety of actors in civil society to address the two major substantive issues considered by the Conference, that is, adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world. In response to resolution 15/2 of the Commission,[4] in which it requested the Executive Director of the Centre to further investigate the issue of the human right to adequate housing, the Centre organized two expert group meetings which laid the groundwork for agreement on this issue at Habitat II.

Technical cooperation

5. In the area of technical cooperation, the Centre provided assistance on a variety of issues to strengthen the capacity of Governments to act as facilitators in the shelter delivery system. These issues included institutional strengthening, implementation of land administration systems, use of local building materials and improvement of environmental infrastructure. The Centre has launched a Disaster Mitigation Programme which provides technical cooperation and advisory services to Governments in connection with the avoidance or minimization of damage to shelter and settlements. A full account of the Centre's cooperation with Member States is provided in the operational activities report, 1997 (HS/C/16/INF.3).[5] The Urban Management Programme undertook a review of many shelter-related issues, including a review of practices in land tenure regularization. The Sustainable Cities Programme organized many city-level consultations with all stakeholders, as a result of which action programmes have been launched on both land and infrastructure issues in a number of cities.

Research and development

6. The Research and Development Programme of the Centre produced a number of technical publications relating to shelter. These address the issues of employment generated by shelter programmes, mobilization of finance at the community level, improving mechanisms for security of tenure, settlement upgrading and waste management. In addition, a large range of issues relating to shelter were reviewed regionally and globally for the preparation of the second global report on human settlements, An Urbanizing World. Furthermore, in the preparatory process for Habitat II, major regional and international reviews were undertaken on several key issues, including transportation, finance, water, land policies, urban management and energy.

Outreach to women

7. The Centre's Women in Human Settlements Development Programme has continued to support women's networks and alliances, conducted training workshops on gender awareness for national and local governmental officials, as well as for

non-governmental organizations and community-based leaders, and has actively promoted women's access to land and property. Participation at various regional and interregional consultations, and documenting of relevant best practices and the publication of evaluative case-studies on women in construction were also part of the Programme's work. In these activities, the Programme has worked directly with non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, along with committed women within both national and local governments in developing, transitional and industrialized countries. Special emphasis was given to ensuring that human settlements issues, especially the right of women to own and inherit land and property, were addressed in the process leading up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing in September 1995.

Capacity-building

8. The Capacity-building Programme has provided direct support to national and local training institutions in sub-Saharan Africa, undertaken a local leadership-training programme in Eastern Europe and has commenced a programme of action to plan for sustainable urban development. The Community Development Programme, after successful experiences at the national level, is now operating regional programmes in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The regional programme in Costa Rica has established an information resource base serving the Central American subregion, utilizing recent developments in information technology.

Information, audio-visual and documentation activities

9. Information dissemination activities were considerably advanced through the use of the most recent advances in information technology. The quarterly publication Habitat News was transformed into Habitat Debate, which contains discussions on issues relating to shelter and settlements. The observation of World Habitat Day in 1995 and 1996 presented opportunities to focus global attention on successful attempts to improve living conditions. Similarly, World Water Day, observed in March 1996, provided an opportunity to publicize the crucial links between water and shelter.

Outreach to non-governmental organizations

10. Cooperation with the non-governmental sector and other partners expanded considerably during the period 1995-1996, largely in the context of preparations for Habitat II. The Centre established a comprehensive data base on non-governmental organizations and other partners active in human settlements and is expanding its programme with those partners which had participated actively in the Habitat II preparatory process and had organized their own forums and presented their declarations and commitments to Committee II of the Conference.

Urban and housing indicators

11. At the present time, the main operational activity of the Centre in relation to the Global Strategy for Shelter, is the application of the urban and housing indicators. The programme expanded considerably during the preparatory process for Habitat II, in pursuance of resolution 15/6 of the Commission[4] and, by September 1996, some 113 countries had participated. In addition to the technical support provided to a number of Governments, two regional technical evaluation seminars were held, one at Bogota for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the other at Bamako for francophone Africa. The global urban indicators database, which is in the process of improvement and refinement, is a

unique resource for examining the problems and conditions of human settlements, and will provide baseline data for monitoring the implementation of national plans of action in the future. The programme has also initiated capacity-building activities in which the indicators form the basis of national monitoring programmes and are used for training officials at the levels of national and local government, as well as to focus attention on important urban and shelter issues and policies which may improve living conditions. In a number of countries, processes are now in place whereby the indicators from the programme, often with some local adaptation, will be used to monitor major national programmes and will be collected in most urban areas.

12. The indicators fall into two groups: those that increase with development and those that do not. As an example, floor area per person, like other forms of consumption, increases rapidly with development, from about 9 square metres per person in the developing countries, to an average of 38 square metres in the developed countries. Housing constructed in compliance with regulations and permanent housing also increase from 50 per cent and 60 per cent, respectively, in the least developed countries, to 98 per cent in the developed countries. Access to mortgages also increases rapidly, from 5 per cent of total debt in the poorest countries, to 30 per cent in the developed countries. Other indicators relating to the production and affordability of housing are largely independent of the level of development. The house-price-to-income ratio and the land development multiplier are notoriously dependent on restrictions on land and housing markets, taking high values in places where land use is restricted or markets are undeveloped. The Centre plans to strengthen its indicators programme in order to assist Member States in adopting the indicators to their specific situations and to expand their application to all major settlements.

13. The Centre's support to Member States on shelter issues will be enhanced in the medium-term plan (1998-2001) in which shelter and social services is one of the four subprogrammes.

B. Action taken by Governments towards the formulation, implementation and monitoring of national shelter strategies

14. Many developing countries are implementing their new or revised national shelter strategies under weak economic conditions, ongoing structural adjustment programmes and globalization of markets. Many countries have commenced programmes of deregulation and privatization to encourage the private sector and are decentralizing responsibilities in the housing sector to local authorities. In order for Governments to become effective facilitators in the shelter sector, they are expected to focus on those activities that the civil society cannot undertake effectively. In most countries, these enabling actions include:

(a) Creating an institutional mechanism that can act as the lead agency in the shelter sector and can effectively coordinate the related actions of other agencies, local authorities and all non-public actors;

(b) Installing major works of infrastructure and establishing a system for the involvement of peoples' organizations, including the private sector, in the installation, operation and maintenance of all subsidiary networks;

(c) Ensuring efficient operation of the market in land, finance and building materials, so that there is affordable access to all income sectors;

(d) Establishing channels for public participation by all sectors of the population in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring of the national shelter strategy at the local and national levels.

15. Below is a brief account of the most important action taken by individual Governments during the period 1995-1996 or planned for the immediate future to formulate, implement or monitor their national shelter strategies or to address specific aspects of shelter and services production. The report is based largely on information provided by Member States in their Habitat II national plans of action and on other reports to the Centre, or to the Commission on Human Settlements at its sixteenth session. Additional information has been obtained from the Centre's Technical Cooperation Programme and from partners active in the shelter sector.

16. Albania has almost completely privatized the public housing stock under the laws enacted to facilitate a market economy. The responsibilities for coordinating the financial and operational aspects between owners and tenants of dwelling units within apartment buildings continues, however, to pose difficulties. The private sector built some 70 per cent of the new buildings in the period 1993-1995 and the existing housing finance system will therefore be strengthened to facilitate this sector.

17. Algeria has identified three main problems which affect the housing sector: the crisis in the housing finance system, which suffers from too much rigidity; the spreading of illegal settlements; and over-consumption of the municipal stock of land. The Government proposes to redefine its role, especially through strengthening the financial system for housing, facilitating access to land and increasing the production of construction materials.

18. Angola has not been able to continue the housing construction programme initiated under the emergency housing programme (1991-1995), and the housing problem continues to grow in seriousness. A national shelter strategy to the year 2000 has been formulated to address the issues of finance and investment, decentralized management of State-owned housing stock, the needs of women and other vulnerable groups, including street children, the demobilized and the displaced. It will also deal with the rehabilitation of buildings.

19. Argentina has designed a national settlements and housing improvement programme based on four main policy elements:

(a) Providing adequate housing for all, by applying diversified programmes such as new construction, replacement of deteriorated stock, credit facilities for improvements and extensions, land allocation and regularization of tenure, promotion of efficient housing construction systems, and ensuring the efficient operation of land markets;

(b) Achieving sustainable social development, through poverty reduction, employment generation in this sector, social integration and improved access to basic services;

(c) Guaranteeing the environmental quality of settlements, through the sustainable use of natural resources, reduction of both pollution and environmental degradation, appropriate management of urban wastes, and raising public awareness on the protection of the urban environment;

(d) Promoting local development, by adequate institutional coordination and democratic participation in decision-making.

20. Armenia has enacted a series of laws relating to the privatization of State enterprises, and 90 per cent of construction enterprises have been transformed into private or joint-stock companies. The new legislation also covers land and property tax in order to facilitate the operation of a market economy in the housing sector.

21. Austria has recorded a steady growth in the number of completed dwellings, from 4.7 units per 1,000 inhabitants in 1990 and 5.4 in 1993, to 6.3 in 1995. This growth has been achieved through a combination of factors: raising levels of federal funding for housing promotion, increasing efficiency of housing-promotion programmes in the provinces, introducing bonds issued by banks for housing construction, and strengthening the roles of building societies and non-profit housing associations. In addition, a regular programme of renovation of housing stock is being pursued in conjunction with support to the rental sector. Particular attention is being given to the increased use of solar energy and to energy conservation by adopting improved methods of heat insulation.

22. Azerbaijan is continuing with the reform of the housing sector but low levels of affordability limit the participation of the needy population in the public or private sector housing programmes. Over 1.8 million people, or 24 per cent of the population, live in houses built by the informal sector that do not conform to minimum standards. A wide range of legislative reforms are being processed to create land markets and mobilize funds for the housing sector.

23. Bangladesh has a serious housing problem, which has physical as well as socio-economic characteristics. The current housing stock is deteriorating fast as a result of ageing, general neglect and poverty. It is estimated that, by the year 2000, the housing shortage will exceed 5 million units. Other problems include the high cost of land and building materials, restricted access to finance, non-durability of much of the housing stock, and inadequate access to potable water and sanitation services. In addition, there is the perennial danger of natural disasters which have destroyed or damaged substantial portions of the housing stock in the past. The national housing policy of 1993 attempted to address these issues and the Ministry of Lands has commenced an exercise to modernize land records.

24. Barbados is improving living conditions by revitalizing the main town centres, developing systems of physical planning and coastal management, and promoting partnerships between the public and private sector, disposing of waste and extending water resources.

25. Belarus has experienced a steady decline in the number of newly built housing units, and shortages of finance have caused a sharp reduction in the extent of repairs to housing and related services. Since the law on privatization was introduced in 1991, some 87 per cent of the housing units in the urban areas have been privatized. New legislation will provide a legal and financial basis for the joint ownership of privatized housing in high-rise urban residential buildings in order to upgrade their financing, use and management. In addition, a system of financial and other institutions will be created to encourage housing construction by individuals, local authorities and private building societies.

26. Belgium explicitly stated in its Constitution of 1993 that the right to decent housing is a constitutional right, and each region is working on the details of its modalities and implementation priorities. The housing sector has

experienced a growing demand owing to the downsizing of households, and social exclusion has been on the increase in the sector. In recent years, land speculation and an unregulated housing market have been particularly detrimental to households below the poverty line in large cities. In 1995, the federal Government adopted new policy orientations towards improving the housing sector and these are being implemented in coordination with the regional governments.

27. Benin has embarked on a process of decentralization to transfer responsibility for land and housing production and management. The National Housing Fund, launched in 1993, is not yet operational, with private housing financial systems and firms now taking the lead in financing several housing projects. A large programme (1993-1997) to rehabilitate urban infrastructure, improve environmental conditions and to strengthen urban management capacity is being implemented in the two main cities. A national urban policy is under way, which includes a large housing component. The new Urban Housing Strategy of 1996 focuses on land, housing markets and financial strategies. It has also been proposed to set up a national office which will help to monitor housing and urban development conditions, while assisting in the implementation of the national plan of action and its follow-up.

28. Bhutan has experienced a gradual change in urban housing development in favour of the higher income market and is now placing special emphasis on affordable housing in the current five-year plan (1997-2002). Comprehensive reviews are already being undertaken on supply, demand and affordability in the shelter sector, as well as housing finance facilities and planning and construction standards for the provision of shelter to the lowest income groups.

29. Bolivia has established the Ministry of Human Development as the main agency responsible for the implementation of its settlements policy. Sectoral strategies for the period 1996-2000 focus on promoting adequate urban development in 311 municipalities. This will be achieved by establishing guidelines and policies for planning and management, preparing land-use plans, improving urban cadastres and participative systems of urban planning, while supporting the elaboration of 80 urban development plans. Housing policies emphasize the development of instruments and mechanisms for their application, including the establishment of efficient land markets, innovative financing, the development of technology and the diversification of housing delivery programmes, as well as community participation. The Government envisages reaching an annual target of 27,560 units to be provided or improved in the period 1996-2000. Water supply and sanitation strategies aim to achieve 95 per cent urban coverage and 75 per cent rural coverage in the year 2000.

30. Bosnia and Herzegovina is engaged in sheltering the homeless who were displaced and those whose homes were destroyed during the war, as well as returning refugees. Specific emphasis is being placed on the reconstruction of infrastructure, communal utilities, and social infrastructure. It is planned to introduce reforms in the housing sector to facilitate the development of free-market conditions in the construction, financing, utilization and maintenance of the housing stock. In addition, a programme of construction of new settlements and new houses is to be launched.

31. Botswana is extending the coverage of its self-help housing programme which has produced more than 50 per cent of the housing stock in the urban areas and provides housing for some 63 per cent of the urban population. Security of tenure is being improved by replacing the land certificates by grants for construction or home improvement, or loans. The high default rate in the payment of loans has improved but continues to be a constraint to the

mobilization of housing finance from commercial sources. Several non-governmental organizations are active in the housing sector and are taking the initiative to apply the enabling strategies to improve housing in the rural areas.

32. Brazil is implementing its urban policy which is based on the principles of decentralization, participation and cooperation among public and private agents. Specific actions in this regard include the establishment of the Secretariat for Urban Policy and the creation of the National Urban Policy Council. The Government is focusing its housing strategy on the establishment of the Permanent Housing Chamber within the National Urban Policy Council and the revision of codes and housing legislation, in accordance with Brazilian realities and the needs of low-income groups. In addition, it is concentrating on implementing targeted housing-subsidy programmes, strengthening the housing finance system, and applying an urban land policy aimed at regularizing land tenure, improving land markets and enabling access to land by all groups. Urban sanitation policies will be implemented by the establishment of a national programme for water conservation and reutilization and the setting up of appropriate institutional structures for its operation.

33. Burkina Faso has identified the lack of a housing finance system as a major constraint to the development of the shelter sector. Construction costs have increased during recent years and the housing crisis is serious, with a high proportion of informal housing in the largest urban centres. Nevertheless, large sites and services programmes, implemented since 1983 in the urban areas, have contributed to the production of 197,112 plots up to 1995. The five-year programme for 1996-2000 includes slum upgrading projects, establishment of a computerized land database, the creation of a national housing bank, the construction of social housing and the strengthening of the construction code through the elaboration of a code de l'urbanisme et de la construction.

34. Burundi has implemented a number of measures relating to housing finance, promotion of local materials, support to self-help construction, fiscal incentives to the private sector and the creation of a special fund for urban housing. The main problems that remain are the high cost of infrastructure and building construction, as well as the inadequacy of the housing-credit system. The national plan of action proposes action in a number of crucial areas. These include a national reconstruction programme for displaced persons and refugees, the reconstruction of infrastructure and damaged housing, and a national programme for urban housing, which will focus on the improvement of the existing housing stock and the production of new houses. These will be achieved through the strengthening of the housing finance system and existing institutions in charge of housing, the decentralization of urban development, the reconstruction of old housing and the promotion of multilevel housing, and the improvement of road infrastructure in residential areas.

35. Cambodia is implementing a programme to improve living conditions of some 150,000 people living in squatter settlements without secure tenure and basic services. The programme is promoting capacity-building and partnership development at the local government and community levels.

36. Cameroon has some 70 per cent of the urban population living in informal neighbourhoods in spite of various attempts to strengthen the institutional framework. In 1991, the Government formulated its urban strategy and its policy for restructuring the housing sector, through an increase in the capacity and efficiency of public agencies dealing with housing and through support to private sector activities. Several reforms are planned in the national plan of

action, especially in land acquisition and management, as well as in housing finance, in order to improve accessibility to housing. It is planned to establish an office for monitoring urban development and the shelter sector at the national level.

37. Canada has responsive and innovative housing policies but, in recent years, housing has become less affordable for low-income households. Solutions to this situation are being sought through innovative approaches to partnerships involving the community, the Government and the private sector. As much as 25 per cent of the housing stock is in need of repair and, in recent years, total expenditure on renovation has exceeded investment in new construction. Research is under way to understand better the extent and nature of homelessness and to identify more effective ways to assist homeless people.

38. Cape Verde has reformed the housing sector during the period 1992-1995 to give a greater role to the Institut d'appui à l'habitation (IAH) which will become the main instrument for housing policies with a private orientation, to transfer responsibilities to local administrations and to redefine the role of the private sector. The measures implemented included a new housing credit system, implementation of several housing programmes in urban centres and a review of systems of land acquisition. In order to reduce construction costs and rents, projects undertaken by IAH and municipalities were based on free competition in relation to construction materials and housing supply to all segments of the population.

39. The Central African Republic is experiencing a major housing crisis, characterized by the spread of informal settlements. At the same time, the supply of land is not able to satisfy the increasing demand. Previous proposals for the creation of specialized financial institutions and a programme of 2,500 new houses have not been implemented. With the economic crisis experienced in the recent past, only 1 per cent of the national budget was devoted to housing. It is planned to create a special housing fund and build a research centre that will specialize in promoting local building materials and will offer training in construction techniques.

40. Chile recognizes that adequate housing is an essential factor in reducing poverty and aims at further strengthening and developing the main elements of its national housing policy. These are: financing and targeting by income segments, applying principles of redistribution and equity, incremental improvement, promoting household savings and the mobilization of private funding to the sector. Human settlements management will be improved by promoting the participation of citizens in needs identification and implementation of solutions, and applying to public sector management the principles of deconcentration and decentralization and strengthening of regional and local governments.

41. China has achieved the goal of one person per room in the rural areas, where nearly one in every two families now live in new houses. In the urban areas also, nearly half the population now live in newly built quarters. However, housing supply seriously lags behind demand and over 4 million urban families have been characterized as in need of adequate shelter. The goals of the national shelter policy are that, by the year 2000, every urban household will have one housing unit, 70 per cent of the families will have units complete with basic facilities and the per capita living space will increase to 12-14 square metres. There will be upgrading of rural housing and the construction quality of both urban and rural housing and their capacity to resist natural disasters will register new improvements. By the year 2010,

every urban household will have one housing unit complete with basic facilities, with a per capita living space of 15-18 square metres, with one room for each person. The Government has formulated a series of policies and strategies to achieve these goals. In addition, the Government has formulated guidelines for urban reform, which include the establishment of public housing funds for urban dwellers, rental increases for public housing and the sale of the existing public housing stock.

42. Colombia has continued improving sectoral management, and the urban policy, "Cities and citizenship", focuses on interministerial coordination and the implementation of strategies for urban development by local authorities. Urban policy gives priority to the promotion of coordinated urban management through the establishment of agreements between concerned parties at the urban, regional and national levels; the execution of urban macro-projects; and the establishment of information systems and indicators for urban management. A programme of technical assistance to municipalities is being implemented, with emphasis on improving local urban planning and management, the strengthening of municipal finances, and supporting the establishment of local institutional and legal frameworks. Sectoral action is being executed in coordination with the social solidarity network and includes specific interventions on housing and infrastructure provision, which consider the granting of direct subsidies, individual or associative, according to the demand.

43. Congo proposed a national shelter strategy in 1992 and the establishment of a national housing bank in 1995, but implementation has been deferred. The five-year programme for 1996-2000 proposes the following actions: strengthening the control of private land developments; development of serviced sites for 42,900 households; strengthening of the housing finance system; incentives for investments in rental housing; and improvement of the access of households to sanitation and sewerage.

44. Costa Rica is implementing its national human settlements policy to give priority to the improvement of low-income settlements, squatter settlements and slums. The strategy of the Government on regional and urban development focuses on the preparation of urban development plans, human resources development, the establishment of an urban-regional development joint commission and technical committees, and the creation of the financial system for urban development. Reform of the institutional structures for urban management are being proposed in order to make them more efficient and to achieve better coordination among the institutions that finance sectoral activities.

45. Côte d'Ivoire is witnessing an annual increase of 19 per cent in the population of informal settlements. Efforts are being made to privatize the housing sector by the transfer of responsibilities to private firms and the cooperative sector. The instruments of privatization are the Compte des terrains urbains, the Direction des ventes immobilières, private firms and financial institutions, the National Housing Bank (BHCI) and Compte de mobilisation pour l'habitat (CDMH), as well as special fiscal incentives to make housing produced by private firms more accessible. The privatization of the housing sector will allow the production of more than 2,000 housing units per year and initiate a new private housing market.

46. Croatia is focusing on the rehabilitation and revitalization of settlements damaged and destroyed by war, the return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes and ensuring conditions for achieving sustainable development. A housing policy is to be formulated which will ensure governmental incentives for rental housing and establish housing finance institutions and housing saving

banks. The housing and indicators programme has been adopted by the Croatia Towns, Cities and Municipalities Association in order to monitor progress in the implementation of new policies in the sector.

47. Cuba is executing its housing strategy to the year 2000 within the framework of a medium-term plan for human settlements development and local plans at the municipal and peoples' council levels. Emphasis is being given to improving the location of housing, services and employment in order to reduce transportation needs; strengthening sanitary measures to reduce the environmental impact of industrial development; fostering the use of local technologies and materials in construction; planning and managing incremental housing programmes which minimize consumption of materials and energy; halting the deterioration of existing housing stock; and initiating its gradual rehabilitation. The Government plans to provide 400,000 housing units in the period 1996-2000, of which 250,000 will be new houses and the rest rehabilitated units. The decision-making capacity of local authorities and administrators will be strengthened and the existing capacity for local production of alternative materials will be enlarged and consolidated, while scientific and technical development and technological innovation will be strengthened by applying the best international and local practices.

48. The Czech Republic is introducing new measures to support housing construction. Some 54 per cent of the housing stock was privatized by 1995 and legislation has been introduced to enable the free sale and purchase of individual units in a block of flats. In addition, a gradual system of liberalization of rents has been introduced. The construction industry is in the process of economic transformation and the private sector now constructs some 90 per cent of all buildings. In 1995, new legislation was introduced to develop a system of long-term mortgages, yet a limited level of direct State financial support will continue for specific programmes to help the socially weakest citizens.

49. Denmark is giving high priority to the issue of energy consumption and ecology in the housing sector and in 1995 enacted a new set of building regulations relating to energy-saving resources. It has also issued a proposal on urban ecology, buildings and residences as a draft for public discussion of a complete urban-ecological plan of action for the building and housing sector. In 1995, a three-year project was launched to strengthen the building industry and make the total renovation process more efficient. About 20 per cent of urban renewal funds are used for projects with an ecological content. The Government has set up an interministerial committee on urban affairs to assess problems in public housing areas and has allocated funds to implement preventive maintenance in residential areas. A gradual increase in tenants' participation in the operation of housing associations has contributed to increasing the quality of public housing. Housing policy has been adjusted in recent years to meet the growing need for dwellings designated especially for the elderly.

50. Djibouti is implementing the last urban development project (1992-1997) which includes the production of new sites and services, the distribution of housing loans and the improvement of infrastructure. The long-term strategy announced in the national plan of action includes the production of service plots with full-cost recovery, the decentralization of responsibilities in the shelter sector and the implementation of a long-term housing finance system, which would mobilize households savings, including those of women.

51. Ecuador is implementing a four-year housing programme to cover the annual increment in demand, estimated at 50,000 units. The programme targets low and

lower middle-income households. The Government will grant subsidies equivalent to 75 per cent of the housing cost and the rest will be funded through the housing finance system, including the housing bank, private banks and the mortgage titling company. Credit financing will apply a monetary unit of constant value to ensure cost recovery. The national settlements strategy focuses on strengthening the institutional, planning and financial capacity of local governments; improving local cadastres to support urban planning and revenue collection; and creating a national information system on housing and human settlements. In the area of environmental sanitation, emphasis is given to the transfer of responsibilities and capacities for urban environmental sanitation and protection to the local authorities, and to achieve cost recovery in service provision through user charges to be fixed at the local level.

52. Egypt is applying the concept of decentralization to spread development evenly, according to the potential of each region. Public participation is therefore considered to be essential for the success of local development. The State has provided the private sector with low-interest loans to induce investment, especially in low-income housing. It has also provided serviced land for construction on non-agricultural lands on the urban periphery. In the current five-year national plan, the private sector was awarded at least an 80 per cent share in new construction. The plan aims to provide new communities and existing cities with improved infrastructure, services and public utilities. The Government has earmarked priority areas and urban centres for urban, social and industrial development.

53. El Salvador has adopted sectoral goals for the period 1996-1999 aimed at reducing the current housing deficit by 25 per cent by reaching approximately 150,000 households. For this purpose, it is proposed to modernize and simplify the institutional and legal framework for housing delivery; to increase housing production by strengthening the role of the private sector and non-governmental organizations; to diversify housing options; to build the capacity of the housing finance system; to promote the growth and mobilization of domestic savings; and to provide security of tenure.

54. Estonia has privatized most of the public housing stock but the necessary access to credit and other features of a free-market system, including land policy reforms, have not advanced sufficiently. Specific problems have been experienced regarding the responsibilities and capacities of the owners and tenants for the maintenance of the various services in apartment blocks.

55. Ethiopia's sample survey of households in 1995 indicated a serious housing situation, with an occupation rate of 2.9 persons per room, 35 per cent of the housing units occupied without a title, and some 28 per cent of the total housing stock in a deteriorated state. The housing supply meets only 10 per cent of the needs and the deficit has been widening. A set of guiding principles, strategies and action proposals have been included in the national plan of action.

56. Finland made a constitutional amendment in July 1995 on fundamental rights which states that it shall be the task of public authorities to promote the right of everyone to a dwelling and to support the efforts of persons to provide their own housing. The country has achieved a considerable improvement in housing conditions, both in terms of living space and standard of dwellings, but is now placing a special emphasis on increasing the production of rental and cooperative housing, increased renovation of existing housing, developing the housing finance system and promoting the stability of the market for rental housing. New policy initiatives introduced in 1996, include new State

guarantees for housing loans for owner-occupation, new interest subsidy for housing companies (condominiums) and a lower down-payment in the home-savings system for first-time buyers. New financial measures have been introduced, whereby the housing fund of Finland has been able to access international capital in addition to the domestic investor market. In the area of housing legislation, the Housing Transaction Act has been enacted to improve consumer protection rights of home buyers, as has the new Tenancy Act which provides greater freedom to parties involved in rental housing.

57. France has more units of housing than households and has almost two million units vacant but, at the same time, some 2.2 million persons are inadequately housed. Among the actions being taken to improve the housing situation are a crash programme of 20,0000 units for the very disadvantaged and the requisitioning of vacant houses from institutional owners. Major reforms to reactivate mobility in the housing market are also being introduced and can thus encourage willing and able occupiers of public housing to move to private-sector housing. Financial assistance for the renovation of private housing is also to be provided, as is the diversification of housing choices to suit changing demands. In addition, housing policy is also to be integrated with urban management and transportation.

58. Gabon has a range of housing finance institutions for land and housing development yet its natural resources are not being sufficiently exploited to produce building materials.

59. Georgia has privatized more than half of the public housing stock but, during recent years, no major repairs or maintenance have been carried out on the remaining public-sector stock. The State housing policy (1996-2000) aims to transfer responsibilities for housing and settlement infrastructure to lower levels of government and to increase housing construction by individuals and cooperatives.

60. Germany continues to improve the general conditions for efficient housing markets and improvement of housing supply. Particular emphasis is being given to the needs of disadvantaged groups in housing and settlements policy; promotion of new forms of housing; market-oriented and socially compatible rent control; and the promotion of home ownership through appropriate financing conditions. In addition, the promotion of cost-saving and land-conserving housing developments, the preservation and upgrading of existing housing stocks, the strengthening of the cooperative housing concept and the promotion of self-help to improve housing conditions are all to be emphasized. Similarly, the long-term housing supply for homeless persons is to be improved.

61. Ghana's application of the housing indicators shows increasing overcrowding, declining quality and declining access to services. The implementation of the national shelter strategy is slow and housing production levels have fallen behind the rate of growth of the population, in particular in the urban areas. There is an absence of financial institutions that can mobilize savings which can be channelled either directly or indirectly into housing and mortgage markets. The operation of the land market has been negatively affected by the lack of up-to-date land records and delays in land transfers and registration of titles. The vast supplies of raw materials and other resources in the country have not been exploited to maximum advantage by the local building industry and a large variety of items are imported for use in construction.

62. Greece has a high ratio of owner-occupation in the housing sector but a significant part of the population lives in dwellings with a serious lack of space. The subsidy system, based mainly on tax exemptions for home owners and purchasers of first homes, favours higher incomes and the sector of owner-occupation. In contrast, the rental sector enjoys virtually no subsidies. The priorities being addressed are a reform of the subsidy structure, support for the rental sector, creation of an adequate safety net of welfare protection for cases of special housing needs and support for innovative efforts to reduce the cost of new housing.

63. Guatemala has defined many goals for its housing and settlements strategy to the year 2000. These are: to generate employment through housing and infrastructure construction; to strengthen the decentralization process for settlements management to local authorities and communities; to initiate programmes for the protection and rehabilitation of historic buildings and the urban heritage in 32 cities; and to increase the coverage of infrastructure services to give priority to low-income settlements and the population affected by the armed conflict. In addition, nearly 83,000 housing units for low-income families are to be built, environmental management plans are to be prepared for Guatemala City and the main urban centres in the country, a national plan for disaster prevention is to be elaborated, and urban development plans are to be formulated for Guatemala City and the regional capitals. To achieve these goals, the Government has developed detailed actions to be carried out at the policy, institutional, legal, technological and financial levels, which are to be coordinated by the Vice-Ministry for Housing.

64. Guinea is implementing sites and services schemes, which constitute its major programme in the area of housing; in the absence of formal financial mechanisms, the programme beneficiaries mobilize their own resources for constructing shelter. This programme and the output of the informal sector together produce an average of 8.5 dwellings per 1,000 inhabitants per annum.

65. Guinea-Bissau is faced by a situation where some 80 per cent of its urban housing stock is in need of improvement and a proposal for orderly development and improvement of urban settlements, approved by the Council of Ministers in 1995, is under formulation.

66. Guyana is implementing its 1994 housing policy, with priority being given to the regularization of squatter settlements using a strategy of community participation to ensure the full mobilization of community resources. With the improvement in the economic situation, a programme of improving infrastructure and land supply for housing is being undertaken. The national plan of action emphasizes the need for further action, including facilitating access to loans to low-income borrowers, and promoting the use of local building materials.

67. Hungary has designated the responsibility for coordination of the housing policy to the Ministry of Finance and has established the National Housing Policy Council to define clearly the role of the central Government on issues of privatization and decentralization of the housing sector. Among the issues that remain to be solved are the privatization of parts of the public rental housing stock, meeting the cost of renovation of private homes in mixed-ownership buildings, the future role of private rental housing, strengthening of market-type financial institutions in the housing sector and the introduction of legal and financial elements of real estate renting. With the decreased level of construction of subsidized public housing, a Welfare Builders' Programme has been established by the Ministry of Welfare, which offers acceptable alternatives to poor young families to obtain their first home, as well as to

the handicapped, the sick and persons who were formerly in the care of the State and their families.

68. Iceland is changing housing policies to increase the participation of the general banking system in housing loans. Home ownership has been gradually increasing and now stands at over 80 per cent. In recent years, considerable improvements have been made to the social housing systems.

69. India's national housing policy, adopted by Parliament in 1994, is the framework for the formulation of State level shelter strategies. The 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution is facilitating the process of decentralization and empowerment of the people. The existing legal and regulatory framework is being modified to stimulate the supply of land and the guided land development programme encourages partnerships between the public housing and development agencies and the private developers and builders. The housing finance system has still to overcome a number of operational constraints and these are to be addressed in the national plan of action, as is the upgrading, renewal and retrofitting of existing housing stock.

70. Indonesia has some 85 per cent of its new housing built annually through community efforts. The Government is implementing policies geared towards capacity-building of the housing institutions and developing complementary roles of the private sector. The housing finance situation is in the developmental stage insofar as low income groups are concerned, since problems persist vis-à-vis affordability, limited resources and access to both non-formal and formal financial institutions. Strategies to address this situation include the development of integrated and transparent housing financial schemes, linking housing investment with the tax system, and income-generating activities. In the construction industry, the problems of inconsistency of standards, lack of production systems and absence of mass production technologies tend to distort the market for building materials. Strategies to address these problems include interventions to improve the relationship between the construction industry, housing markets and resources in order to reduce costs and improve quality.

71. The Islamic Republic of Iran is implementing its shelter programmes within the context of the second social, economic and cultural development plan (1995-1999). In addition to extensive programmes in land development for housing programmes, specific attention is being given to temporary housing for homeless people and refugees, as well as to the provision of housing and services in disaster areas.

72. Ireland issued a policy document entitled "Local housing: the way ahead (1995)", which acknowledges the role of all tenures in the housing system. Home ownership is supported by mortgage interest relief, cash grants to first-time purchasers of newly built dwellings, the absence of a general property tax on dwellings, sale of public housing to tenants and the shared ownership system. The provision of housing accommodation by voluntary and other non-profit organizations to supplement the local authority housing programme has been actively encouraged. This sector now provides up to 25 per cent of new social rental housing. The importance of a private rented sector in the overall housing system is now already recognized and the promotion of a more diverse and well-managed rented sector is one of the specific objectives of housing policy.

73. Israel has achieved a level of home ownership at 71 per cent of all households through the housing assistance programme. The project renewal programme, which now operates in some 90 urban areas, is one of the main programmes for improving the living conditions in poor settlements. It adopts

an integrated approach to improvement in housing, infrastructure and social services and promotes social stability and local entrepreneurship. A special programme caters to the housing of the elderly.

74. Italy is adjusting its housing policies to produce specific types of housing to respond to new and smaller types of households and has constructed experimental units throughout the country. Modalities for cooperation between the public and private sectors are being developed and the construction industry is reorganizing itself to meet the changing demands of large and complex redevelopment projects, involving mixed uses and integrated infrastructure and finance mechanisms. There has been increasing transfer of responsibility to the regions and especially to local administrations.

75. Jamaica is coping with rises in construction costs as well as the cost of mortgage finance. A network of financial institutions mobilize savings and, in order to make housing loans more affordable, the National Housing Trust operates a graduated payment mortgage scheme. A new Ministry of Environment and Housing has been created, which brings together the portfolios of land, physical planning, shelter and environment in a coordinated relationship.

76. Japan is adjusting its housing strategies to cater to its changing demographic features. It is expected that, by the year 2010, the average size per household will decrease to 2.55 persons and the combined share of households consisting of single persons or married couples will rise to 51 per cent. In addition, the share of the total population consisting of persons aged 65 or more will reach about 21 per cent. The seventh housing construction five-year programme (1996-2000) includes stipulations on residential standards for qualitative improvement, level of construction and policies to be implemented. The stipulated housing standard is to be attained for 50 per cent of all households by the year 2000. During the period 1996-2000, it is planned to construct 7.3 million residences, of which about 50 per cent will require funding by public assistance.

77. Jordan is undertaking reforms in the housing and urban sector, aiming to engage the private sector in housing provision for the low-income groups by simplifying the processes involved and empowering private sector developers to apply the same procedures and standards as are used by the main public sector agency, the Housing and Urban Development Corporation. The Housing and Urban Development Corporation itself is being reformed to develop better partnerships with private sector developers, as well as to initiate a secondary mortgage facility to allow for long-term and more affordable loans for the public.

78. Kazakhstan's housing policy is based on the principles of transferring housing delivery mechanisms from the State to the market, elaborating the constitutional provisions on the housing rights of citizens, encouraging participation within an enabling framework and transforming the housing sector from a State-subsidized one to a self-financed one. The national housing programme has the objective of forming an efficient housing market and modernizing the construction industry. Special attention is being given to the establishment of new housing finance systems in order to provide access to credit to all social groups to meet their housing needs.

79. Kenya drew from the urban and housing indicators to identify its own set of policy-sensitive housing indicators, namely, needs indicators and national performance indicators. The experience has been effective in capacity-building, in data collection and management, as well as in creating a forum for the exchange of information. It has resulted in useful databases which will form

the basis of monitoring and evaluating the sector's performance. A complete set of strategies has been formulated through a comprehensive process; the strategies address issues such as shelter delivery systems, housing markets, land supply, the regularization of informal settlements, finance, building materials, construction and technology.

80. Kiribati has designated as a priority the need for the development of a national shelter strategy. A project on institutional strengthening in the housing sector is under implementation, in cooperation with the Overseas Development Administration of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and a more permanent institutional arrangement is being identified. Meanwhile, the housing indicators programme is being incorporated into the work of the national statistics office.

81. The Lao People's Democratic Republic has formulated guidelines for a national housing strategy to the year 2000 in order to meet the needs of the most underprivileged group in society and to avoid the development of informal housing without basic infrastructure. The strategy will also make adjustments to the current legislation, to allow the involvement of the private sector in housing development and also to adjust municipal budgets, in order to cover public expenditure on housing and land.

82. Latvia has transferred about 85 per cent of the public housing stock to municipalities or the private sector. Municipalities now have the responsibility for allocating housing allowances and providing for the homeless. The Latvia Mortgage and Land Bank, together with private and state banks, is mobilizing finance for housing.

83. Lebanon is implementing a major national reconstruction programme estimated at US$ 20 billion. A special Ministry for the Displaced has been created to rehabilitate infrastructure and to help resettle approximately 100,000 displaced persons.

84. Lesotho is currently reviewing the national housing policy, which will address urban as well as rural housing. The town planning legislation is also being revised, to simplify development rights affecting low-income housing. The national plan of action identifies a series of actions to be taken to improve the functioning of the housing sector.

85. Liberia has placed emphasis on relief activities and is taking a number of initiatives on capacity-building in preparation for reconstruction. These include the establishment of a housing desk in the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, the formulation of new directions for the National Housing Authority and the decentralization of its operations, refocus of the activities of the National Housing and Savings Bank for the financing of shelter and infrastructure and the establishment of a home reconstruction loan scheme.

86. Lithuania had privatized some 87 per cent of the public housing stock by 1995 and the majority of the remaining housing will be transferred to local authorities. The housing finance system is gradually developing the capacity to provide long-term loans.

87. Madagascar has recognized several weaknesses in the housing sector and a large proportion of housing construction is being undertaken by the informal sector in the absence of an adequate public sector capacity for land management and the non-availability of long-term credit from commercial banks. Among the measures the Government plans to take to vitalize the housing sector are the

development of land registration systems, setting up a housing finance system and developing guidelines for the use of local materials and construction methods.

88. In Malawi, about 80 per cent of the urban population lives in traditional housing areas - planned and unplanned villages and squatter settlements. There is increasing participation by non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations. The Ministry of Housing has been created to coordinate the implementation of the housing component of the national development policy.

89. Malaysia has set up a national consultative committee on housing, comprising state and professional organizations. The housing programme is being implemented within the framework of the seventh Malaysia plan (1996-2000) and addresses in-depth issues of low-income housing, the upgrading of squatter settlements, home ownership schemes for workers in estates and mines and further development of the housing finance systems.

90. Maldives has identified a number of issues in its national plan of action, including land use, improvements to infrastructure, low-cost housing, use of alternative building materials, and strengthening of the construction industry and financing mechanisms.

91. Mali's implementation of the national shelter strategy adopted in 1992 has been rather slow, as a result of the weak state of the national economy. Some 90 per cent of shelter is being produced by the informal sector and through self-help methods.

92. Malta has further extended the process of decentralization after the creation of local councils in 1991 and has created a series of policy reforms in recent years, which include the adoption of the first structure plan as the framework for environmental management and sustainable development and the creation of the Planning Authority as an autonomous body mandated to implement development policies.

93. Mauritania has a number of public agencies in the housing sector but, in spite of their activities, some 43 per cent of households are living in inadequate shelter, mainly owing to lack of access to affordable finance. In order to address this problem, the Mauritania Housing Bank was established in 1996 but it requires time to mobilize stable and long-term resources. Other priorities for action include the upgrading of informal settlements; increasing the supply of affordable serviced land; reforming legislation concerning building construction; improving the housing finance system; and encouraging investment in rental housing.

94. Mauritius is in the process of improving the package of incentives being offered to encourage the private sector, which so far has not been able to target low-income groups. In public sector housing, new initiatives taken to reach the low-income sector include allowing lower down-payments and better repayment schedules for loans, increasing the density of land utilization for housing developments, providing a subsidy by waiving the cost of land and infrastructure and applying lower interest rates. Particular attention is being given to the production of standardized building components in order to achieve efficiency in the construction sector.

95. Mexico is implementing its human settlements activities for the period 1995-2000 within the framework of its national urban development programme and

the national housing programme. The national urban development programme focuses on four operational areas: the one hundred cities programme, aimed at strengthening the capacity of cities to receive investments and promote development; the programme for the consolidation of metropolitan areas; the promotion of regional planning and the strengthening of the legal framework for urban development; and the programme for the promotion of social and private sector participation in urban development. The national housing programme gives emphasis to strengthening housing sector institutions at the national, State and local levels; and improving the housing finance system to include the mobilization of domestic savings, strengthening the secondary mortgage market and the incorporation of new options for housing finance. It will also deregulate and scale down taxation in the housing sector, increase the supply of land available at accessible prices, promote self-help construction for rural and urban housing and promote the development of technology and innovation in housing and construction.

96. Mongolia plans to formulate a national urban and housing policy which will include laws and regulations on urban management and planning and programmes for decentralization, infrastructure development, capacity-building and creation of awareness in the area of urban management.

97. Morocco has a wide range of private sector developers as well as cooperative societies and informal entrepreneurs in the housing sector and, in recent years, the Government has focused on the upgrading and regularization of the informal settlements, developing new techniques of management of programmes initiated by public agencies in the housing sector and further mobilization of the private sector. Further actions being taken to improve the housing sector are a review of the complex set of legal arrangements dealing with land matters, and improvement of both the housing financial systems, the housing production process and, in particular, the building materials and construction industries.

98. Mozambique is preparing a national housing programme within the framework of the national housing policy adopted in 1990. The objectives are to promote a quantitative increase in housing production in the rural areas, to introduce technologies involving local materials and resources for rural and peri-urban housing and to promote low-cost and self-build housing programmes.

99. Namibia has placed primary responsibility for the provision of housing on the head of each household, with the State only intervening in those aspects which are beyond the individual's control, such as access to serviced land and finance. The implementation of the national housing policy encourages the full participation of all stakeholders - the communities, the private sector, financial institutions, local authorities and individuals - in the housing process. This is achieved through the build-together programme, which encourages and facilitates community development groups to manage house-building programmes at the local level, including the production of building materials and maintenance of a high level of loan repayment. Local authority support is rendered in three major ways: making affordable serviced land available to beneficiaries; giving technical advice to builders and monitoring approved building plans; and providing general consultancy services and logistical support, such as office space and transport.

100. Nepal is strengthening the broad-based consultative process for implementing shelter strategies. The build-together national housing programme being implemented through the participatory process provides for new housing in urban and rural areas, upgrading and regularization of informal settlements, and community-based cooperative housing and savings schemes. Among the innovative

schemes undertaken recently is a land-policy project coordinated by the Kathmandu Municipal Corporation, in which lands belonging to 316 landowners were brought together for orderly development with infrastructure and social facilities. The project has had a positive impact on urban development, as well as promoting participation among stakeholders in a situation where land is scarce.

101. The Netherlands has approximately 800 housing corporations, which are non-profit organizations that build and manage subsidized rental housing and which form the backbone of the nation's housing system. The stock of subsidized rental housing is 45 per cent of total stock, and home ownership is being promoted through fiscal incentives and risk-limiting safety nets. The current thrust is directed towards designating a new role for housing corporations as independent social entrepreneurs; strengthening the position of tenants' organizations; applying the capital already invested in the sector as a revolving fund; and replacement of government funding and government guarantees by private financing and semi-private guarantees. Special measures are being taken to encourage senior citizens to remain in their homes.

102. Nicaragua is committed to a housing programme for the period 1996-2000 aimed at the provision of 96,000 housing units through the improvement of existing stock, new housing and the delivery of serviced lots. To this end, human settlements strategies will be coordinated with the national policies for poverty reduction, employment generation and attention to vulnerable groups. Action will be taken to improve targeting of government subsidies to the most needy groups. In the area of settlements development, the Government's strategy focuses on the sustainable use of land through adequate land-use planning; improvement of the urban economy and poverty reduction; improvement of the urban environment and health; achievement of balanced urban-rural development; and strengthening of the national capacity for disaster prevention, mitigation and rehabilitation.

103. The Niger has some 50 per cent of the households in the capital living in rental housing, most of which has been built by the informal sector, since public agencies for housing finance and housing production are unable to function adequately. Some 23 per cent of the housing loans in 1993 were granted to women. The housing indicators were used to select finance for housing and land development as the priority areas for special attention.

104. Nigeria has elaborated strategies for implementation under the national housing policy, national urban development policy and the National and Regional Planning Decree. The strategies include strengthening capacity for the effective monitoring of the operations of primary mortgage institutions, institutionalizing an efficient land market by reducing the activities of middlemen in land transactions and according official recognition to community-based organizations in local government administration.

105. Norway has high housing standards and coverage but some specific tasks are being undertaken to address remaining problems. These are: to enable disadvantaged groups, young people and refugees to establish themselves in the housing market; to improve the existing housing conditions, especially for persons living under poor, cramped conditions; to adapt housing to the needs of the elderly and the handicapped; and to build ecologically sound houses and residential environments. Changes have been proposed to the system of financing housing to meet these challenges.

106. Oman has no urgent problems in the housing sector but is giving further attention to the use of local building materials, recovery of infrastructure costs and encouraging the private sector in the construction industry. A five-year plan for the housing of low-income groups is under implementation.

107. Pakistan is implementing its revised national housing policy, which calls for institutional strengthening and fiscal measures to give impetus to the housing sector. There is limited access to housing finance by the poor and alternative mechanisms are being developed, following a detailed study on housing credit operations in the informal sector. Two well-known projects on housing and services for the poor, the Orangi project at Karachi and the Khuda-ki-Basti sites and services programme at Hyderabad, demonstrate viable solutions for the poor.

108. Palestine has set up a number of projects to meet the growing need for housing, which are being undertaken by the Palestine Authority. The Palestinian Housing Council is executing projects in the Gaza Strip involving dwelling units as well as infrastructure and social facilities. The Ministry of Housing is executing various projects and is mobilizing the private sector to build housing and infrastructure through the application of flexible regulations in line with the need. Planned actions include the development of land and infrastructure, upgrading of settlements, support to rental housing and development of housing finance systems.

109. Paraguay has focused its settlements strategy for the period 1996-2000 on five programme areas:

(a) Regional planning and urban development to achieve a coherent allocation of resources and investments on development;

(b) Completion of the development and environmental plans for the capital city and its metropolitan area, as well as the formulation of proposals for urban transport management;

(c) Poverty alleviation by, inter alia, increasing investments on infrastructure and basic services;

(d) Settlements development through the review of the legal framework for the sector, promotion of rural settlements development, support to local authorities in management improvement and achieving a rational use of land through the development of improved cadastral systems;

(e) Housing and infrastructure improvement, to decrease the existing deficit by tapping new and non-conventional financial resources for investment in the sector.

110. Peru has formulated a shelter strategy aimed at eliminating the existing deficits in housing and infrastructure within the period 1996-2000. It envisages the annual production of 190,000 housing solutions, of which 63 per cent correspond to new units and the rest to improvements. It is expected that 47 per cent of the required investment will be financed directly by households, and the rest through the private construction and financial sector and public resources. It is also envisaged that 100 per cent coverage for water supply and sanitation services in urban and rural settlements will be achieved in the same period. To reach these targets, emphasis is given to the simplification of the legal procedures regulating the housing markets; promotion of the participation of the private sector; mobilization of domestic savings for

sectoral investment; regularization of land tenure; and making effective use of construction activities to generate employment and income. The strategy for urban and regional development will be implemented through measures such as strengthening the capacity of local authorities and communities to promote and manage local development; improving the allocation of land for urban uses; modernizing the urban cadastres; and raising citizens' awareness of urban and environmental conservation.

111. The Philippines organized a Housing Summit which had as its theme national progress through self-help housing. Housing is now viewed as a social responsibility, not that of the Government alone, yet most of the direct housing production is undertaken by the private sector and social-development oriented non-governmental organizations are working with concerned government agencies in providing skills training and capacity-building programmes to the housing beneficiaries. Shelter programmes for the poorest 30 per cent of the population have been targeted by the Community Mortgage Programme, as has a special fund to assist low-income home buyers.

112. Poland is witnessing signs of recovery in the housing sector after the decrease in housing construction brought about by the many changes made in legislation and institutions for the introduction of market mechanisms in that sector. New legislation has been introduced to facilitate better maintenance of the housing stock and to encourage the participation of the private sector in rental housing. Some difficulty is being experienced in establishing a land cadastre and settling property rights to land and buildings in the complex process of their transfer from the State to the private sector.

113. Portugal is implementing a series of policies concerning urban housing and development, which include promoting a comprehensive and efficient management of land and resources, ensuring social equilibrium by guaranteeing the basic needs of citizens, support to vulnerable groups in the community and improvement of the conditions in which women live and work. The policies guarantee adequate housing for all, together with access to infrastructure and services, by redefining land and rental policy and promoting effective local authority action, as well as linking of new housing areas and other related measures.

114. The Republic of Korea estimates that 87 per cent of the population will be living in urban areas by the year 2001 and expects a higher demand for better quality housing as the number of middle class households rapidly expands. The national housing policy is well integrated with macro-economic policies and future housing policy will focus on three issues: deregulation consistent with market-oriented economic and financial policy; promotion of industry; and improvement in policy instruments, housing finance and housing-related taxation. In order to improve housing conditions for the urban poor, the Government is proposing two programmes for the next five years, on urban renewal and public rental housing construction. In the urban renewal programme, some 160 redevelopment sites have been identified and the programme is being implemented in cooperation with the municipal authorities and the communities concerned in order to ensure that adequate arrangements are made for the population resident in the renewal areas. In the rental housing programme, it is proposed to increase the proportion of rental housing from 5.4 per cent to 10 per cent of housing stock.

115. The Republic of Moldova's housing policy places emphasis on the protection of tenants' rights; new mechanisms for decision-making which permit involvement of the public; privatization of dwellings and availability of a range of designs, building materials, construction technologies and equipment; and

restructuring of the building construction system to adjust to market operations.

116. Romania is introducing further legislation to stimulate new construction by private funding and local authorities and to establish the relationships between landlords and tenants. The proportion of private ownership of houses is over 90 per cent and the number of private construction firms has been increasing. The housing policy is placing emphasis on housing for young families, social housing, mobilization of foreign capital, development of a capital market for housing and development of mortgage and housing insurance institutions.

117. The Russian Federation has an interdepartmental commission for the implementation of reforms in the housing sector as part of the comprehensive economic reform being undertaken in the transition to market operations. In addition to privatization of the housing stock, attention is being given to the need to ensure the preservation and renovation of the existing housing stock through rehabilitation, reconstruction and modernization. There has been a gradual increase in the amount of private sector funding for housing construction and improvement but there is a continuous search for new ways and sources of financing housing construction and communal services and the implementation of measures to reduce costs of housing construction, maintenance and repairs. Considerable attention has been given to the architectural aspects of privately and cooperatively constructed housing, including design, thermal insulation and energy consumption for construction. New legislation is to be introduced to further improve operations in the housing sector.

118. Rwanda proposes to undertake a range of activities to improve living conditions. These include redevelopment of selected settlements, land development, housing finance, improvement of infrastructure and social services, rehabilitation and extension of road networks, and support to the informal sector, women and vulnerable groups.

119. Sao Tome and Principe is implementing strategies which include regularization of land titles to facilitate loans, expanding the social housing programme, encouraging and assisting poor households to obtain housing, encouraging private investment, promoting the production of building materials and encouraging the construction sector.

120. Saudi Arabia has an excess in the overall housing supply with a large number of vacant dwellings in the public and private sectors but there are also many houses in need of repair. In recent years there has been a significant decrease in real estate and rental values and construction costs have stabilized. To address the situation, the Government is planning a number of measures, which include reviewing the distribution of responsibilities in housing affairs in the public sector; limiting public agencies' construction activities to essential needs; developing a viable approach to improving the housing conditions of low income citizens; and mobilizing private capital into housing.

121. Senegal is implementing a range of programmes which address the low-income sector. These include the allocation of public land for housing, undertaking of extensive sites and services projects, regularization of informal settlements, a range of housing finance institutions, and promotion of production of building materials and construction of housing by the public, private and cooperative sectors. The housing cooperative sector is growing rapidly, with 265 cooperatives having 33,000 members. The emphasis in future will be on expansion of the sites and services programme and improvements in the land development

process; production of housing at affordable costs; upgrading of informal settlements; putting an end to the illegal occupation of land by prior planning and allocation; promoting initiatives of the private sector and community organizations; and improving the housing finance system.

122. Seychelles has a new Constitution which recognizes the right of every citizen to adequate shelter and requires the State to take steps to facilitate the effective realization of that right, in partnership with public and private organizations. Among the strategies aimed at achieving these goals are new initiatives for mobilizing domestic savings and financial incentives aimed at stimulating investment in housing. These include the reduction of stamp duty on land transactions, abolition of taxes on income derived from residential property and reduction of duties on a range of imported construction materials; the implementation of a US$ 12 million land bank project aimed at ensuring access to affordable and serviced land; and the implementation of a geographic information system for improved decision-making in the management of scarce land resources.

123. Sierra Leone has a high proportion of renters compared to homeowners and the average rent constitutes about 67 per cent of household income. Informal housing finance is the predominant mode of financing housing construction. Constraints also exist in land management, building materials, legislation and institutional capacity. The national housing policy proposes to address these and other related issues.

124. Slovakia has commenced a housing savings scheme, supplemented by the State budget, to develop a mortgage credit system. Among the issues to be addressed are the establishment of non-profit organizations for the development, management and maintenance of the housing stock; renewal of the housing stock in urban and rural areas; and support for small and medium enterprises and local producers in the area of building materials, construction and rehabilitation.

125. Slovenia has experienced a gradual improvement in the affordability of housing but the ratio of house price to household income is high at 7:1. There has been an overall decrease in the level of housing construction, but the ratio of private sector housing construction compared to public sector has been increasing.

126. South Africa's goal is progressively to increase housing's share of the total State budget to 5 per cent and increase the rate of housing delivery on a sustainable basis to a peak level of 350,000 units per annum. The National Housing Vision, which is the framework for achieving this goal, is pursued through a number of key strategies and programmes in partnership with all key stakeholders. These strategies include a campaign which calls on people to participate in building their communities, mobilizing savings and housing credit, a mortgage indemnity scheme, a national home builder warranty fund, a national housing education fund and a housing subsidy scheme. A number of legislative changes have been made to facilitate and expedite the implementation of reconstruction and development programmes and projects relating to land. Institutional arrangements are under way to rationalize the existing institutional capacity within a long-term strategic framework. In addition, the improvement of housing is a key component of the rural development programme. A national information project has been launched to improve the database for monitoring and evaluating the impact of housing and other policies.

127. Spain has defined a set of lines of action to implement the national Habitat programme which is coordinated by the Ministry of Public Works,

Transport and the Environment. Land policies are implemented through the strategic programme for land use, 1995-2001, currently under preparation. Housing policies focus on improving the operation of the housing markets, promoting rental housing, improving the access to financing, promoting housing rehabilitation and achieving an environmentally sound and energy-efficient operation of the construction sector. Urban environmental policies are implemented within the framework of the national plans for the rehabilitation of polluted land, and the treatment of waste water and dangerous wastes. Infrastructure strategies give emphasis to the improvement of trunk infrastructure networks. Urban transport policies focus on demand reduction, prioritizing public transport and reducing energy consumption. Finally, urban social policies aim at promoting equity in the provision of services and the attention to vulnerable groups.

128. Sri Lanka plans to expand the collection of indicators to all urban areas, and establish a national housing and urban data bank. Monitoring bodies will be established at the community, local and regional levels. An innovative model has been developed for community action planning for the improvement of settlements.

129. The Sudan has both quantitative and qualitative problems in housing. Major priorities are the improvement and maintenance of the housing stock and upgrading the environmental aspects of informal settlements by communities. The national plan will focus on the supply of serviced land, provision of social facilities, housing finance, building construction and capacity-building.

130. Swaziland has almost half of its urban population living in informal settlements. Experience in the implementation of the national housing policy has indicated that enabling strategies have been unable to enfranchise low-income earners within the formal housing market. The urban development project is addressing this issue through the provision of secure land tenure and the application of appropriate building regulations.

131. Sweden has identified eight policy areas which represent the most fundamental and important challenges that have to be addressed effectively in the short and medium term in the country in order to ensure adequate shelter for all and the sustainable development of Swedish human settlements. These are: general housing policies under new financial constraints; adaptation of buildings and built-up areas to an environmentally sound lifestyle and other demands; improved living conditions in distressed residential areas; better integration of immigrants; consolidation of the position of Swedish municipalities; increased attractiveness of Swedish settlements to people and enterprises; land-use strategies for an environmentally-sound approach in Swedish cities; and strengthening of participatory local democracy through continued work on Local Agenda 21.

132. The Syrian Arab Republic has been able to maintain a high level of construction of new housing but there is a housing crisis owing to poor distribution, inadequate legislation, lack of adequate funding mechanisms, and insufficient investment in land and infrastructure development. Spontaneous settlements of the poor continue to spread around the cities. The national plan of action addresses all these issues within the context of planned settlements development.

133. Thailand's National Housing Bank has successfully competed in the financial market to mobilize increasing levels of finance for the housing sector. This has had the effect of higher levels of housing production by the private sector.

An innovative community development programme has been established, with intensive community participation, to promote the integrated improvement of poor communities. The programme provides loans to communities for attending to priorities as set by the communities themselves, and covers shelter, infrastructure and social services, employment generation and other needs.

134. Togo has three major public institutions in the housing sector and plans to enhance productivity in the sector by simplifying development processes, decentralizing responsibilities and improving financial mechanisms. The housing programme also provides for the improvement of infrastructure and services in the informal settlements.

135. Trinidad and Tobago has been constantly introducing new measures to improve the implementation of the various programmes in the housing sector. Issues being addressed include new legislation, affordability, regularization of squatters, high development standards, land management, gender issues, joint ventures and community partnerships, import content in housing construction and financing mechanisms. Viable partnerships between the public and private sectors are now producing housing at agreed price levels and efforts are being made to optimize the use of the human and capital resources of the construction industry.

136. Tunisia has been implementing its national programme of rehabilitation improvement in low-income neighbourhoods, which has made qualitative changes in the living conditions in these settlements through the provision of roads, sanitation, potable water and electricity. Under this programme, the extent of inadequate housing was gradually reduced to 2.7 per cent of the housing stock by 1994. Programmes have been set up to develop the rural economy and to integrate employment opportunities in rural areas.

137. Turkey's housing delivery systems have been restructuring themselves in response to socio-economic changes in the country. In general, the number of housing units produced is adequate but the distribution of the housing supply among different income groups and regions and its quality remain the major problems. State housing policies have been oriented towards encouraging building for private ownership and have not catered adequately to the housing needs of the poor. Squatter settlements are being upgraded through partnerships between central and local government and the private sector. There is a need for the further improvement of housing delivery through cooperatives and the development of new markets to enable access by low-income groups.

138. Uganda is encouraging home ownership and is divesting itself of most of the public housing stock. The national housing strategy is under implementation and policy reforms in the field of land management, which were formulated after nation-wide consultations, are under implementation, in cooperation with local authorities. Many community-based organizations are active in shelter production and maintenance and continuous efforts are being made for the acceptance of the right of women to own property.

139. Ukraine has privatized some 30 per cent of the state housing stock. The proportion of housing built through the resources of individuals and construction cooperatives has increased, large-panel type construction has decreased and brick housing construction has increased. Further legislation is proposed in order to mobilize private sector finance and to facilitate the ownership of units in condominiums. Particular attention is given to the maintenance of the existing stock.

140. The United Arab Emirates coordinates the housing sector policy with the individual emirates, which have their own regulatory organs and institutions, and with the local authorities. Particular attention is given to the housing needs of low-income groups and special programmes are being implemented to provide housing for migrant workers.

141. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is experiencing the steady growth of owner-occupied housing. The proportion of local authority housing declined to some 18 per cent of total stock in 1995 and, by contrast, the housing association sector grew. The Government's overall objectives for housing have been set out in a White Paper, entitled "Our future homes" (1995) and these include increasing the number of owner-occupied homes, reducing significantly the population of homes lying vacant and transforming the remaining large-scale, poor quality public estates through public and private sector partnership. The White Paper also sets out the role of the central Government in providing the right conditions for public and private investment through management of the overall economy, and local authorities will be encouraged to take a strategic enabling approach in respect of all housing tenures and a reduced role as landlords. Housing associations are to continue as the main providers of social housing. Another aim is to sustain the revival of private renting by encouraging more investors into the market through the creation of housing investment trusts and through further deregulation of private renting.

142. The United Republic of Tanzania has approved a new national land policy and new land legislation is being formulated through an extensive process of public consultation. The new land policy is expected to lead to a general improvement in efficiency and equity in land tenure and administration. Reforms in the housing sector have been undertaken at the institutional level but inadequate investment has been made to improve infrastructure and housing finance mechanisms are at the early stages of development.

143. The United States of America has an adequate supply of widely available housing but many people cannot afford this housing because of low incomes and rising costs. Over the years, the proportion of rents to income of renter households has been increasing, and home ownership is now out of reach of low income households. The demographics of the homeless are changing. There are fewer elderly homeless, yet women and children represent a higher proportion of the new homeless. Increasing emphasis is given to promoting locally-crafted solutions, supported by several federal government programmes.

144. Uruguay has approved its five-year housing plan, with a strengthening of its integrated system for access to housing. The plan emphasizes attention to the housing demand through the use of appropriate credit mechanisms and the granting of direct and transparent subsidies to low-income households. The plan creates an enabling environment for the participation of the private construction and financial sector in housing delivery. The Ministry of Housing, Regional Development and Environment is giving priority in the production of social housing. It also assigns priority to squatter settlement and slum upgrading programmes and the establishment of clear rules for rental housing. In the area of urban development, the Government focuses on the establishment of efficient land markets, the strengthening of local authorities, the improvement of urban transport and the achievement of a rational use of natural resources in urban areas. Regional development strategies aim at developing the comparative advantages of Uruguay and its capital city, Montevideo, as a centre for services and the network of activities in the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR).

145. Venezuela continues to implement its housing activities within the framework of the housing policy law. The law enables investments in the sector by the allocation of fiscal resources and private savings from pension funds. Social housing solutions are delivered through a system of community, intermediate and funding organizations, operating within the national housing systems. The national technical assistance system is a key element in the efforts of the Government to strengthen the capacity of the various agents involved in housing delivery. The law also assigns to regional governments and local authorities a larger role in the housing sector. The Government is applying a sectoral policy that promotes the strengthening of the links between the construction sector and income-generating activities and poverty reduction, the prevention of natural disasters, and the diversification of housing finance instruments. Urban development policies place emphasis on improving the management capacity and financial soundness of local authorities, including the upgrading of cadastral, revenue collection and information mechanisms.

146. Yemen depends largely on the informal sector and self-help methods of building in the housing sector. The rate of construction has declined as a result of the rising price of land and building materials and the emigration of labour. Efforts are being made to set up an information bank on the use of local materials.

147. Yugoslavia has privatized some 90 per cent of the public housing stock and the issues now being addressed include maintenance of the existing housing stock, legalization of housing developments which are not in accordance with the approved plans, engagement of local authorities in solving the housing problems of vulnerable groups, review of standards and norms and improvement of the database on housing. The Government has also formulated special programmes to settle and integrate permanently a large number of refugees and displaced people. To this effect, commissioners for refugees have been set up in Serbia and in Montenegro.

148. Zaire has a number of priority areas in its plan of action. These include the establishment of an institutional framework for land development, the upgrading of informal settlements, the reform of legislation and the establishment of an institutional framework for the production of 6,250 houses per annum during the period 1996-2000.

149. Zambia's housing situation is a reflection of the growing incidence of poverty, affecting some 76 per cent of the population. The annual rent is about 50 per cent of the annual household income, the rate of housing production is only 0.93 units per thousand population, and the quality of environmental infrastructure is becoming progressively poorer. The national housing policy has already received the Government's approval and an implementation strategy is to be formulated. The broad outlines of the strategy are contained in the Habitat II national plan of action. Among the institutional revisions being undertaken are the creation of two new departments in the Ministry of Local Government and Housing to ensure that issues of infrastructure, physical planning and housing are more effectively addressed.

150. Zimbabwe continues to review the roles of central and local governments in urban and shelter management. The provision of finance for shelter and urban development has been constrained by the absence of an attractive investment climate, a negative regulatory environment, a narrow housing finance base and low levels of savings owing to low disposal incomes. The private sector, the informal sector and civic groups have been taking on an increasing role since the introduction of deregulation in 1993. The Zimbabwe private sector housing

programme is mobilizing US$ 150 million to address the construction, building materials and construction equipment industries and the land delivery and housing finance systems.

C. Action taken by the United Nations system

151. The Economic Commission for Africa has issued a continental shelter atlas, containing an extensive analysis of various aspects of shelter in the region, including building materials and shelter finance. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific organized the second Asia-Pacific Urban Forum, with the participation of representatives of national and local governments, multilateral and bilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and the private sector. Twelve specific issues in housing and urban management were identified for concerted action in the region. In addition, it is implementing an urban poverty programme and is coordinating the city-net programme, interconnecting local authorities in the Asian and Pacific region. The Economic Commission for Europe issued a series of guidelines on housing policy, land administration, urban renewal and housing modernization and sustainable human settlements planning and management, with a focus on their application in economies in transition. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has continued to support the annual meeting of ministers of housing and human settlements to facilitate the high-level exchange of experience. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has integrated its human settlements programme with other activities in socio-economic development and continues to coordinate its programme in the region with the League of Arab States.

152. Many organizations of the United Nations system undertook a variety of actions to support Member States in the improvement of shelter and services. The Commission on Sustainable Development, for example, is reviewing five years of implementation of Agenda 21,[6] of which the field of human settlements, including shelter, forms an essential part. The United Nations Development Programme continued to provide funds under its regional and country programmes for improvements in shelter, infrastructure and services, with particular emphasis on capacity-building. The International Labour Organization collaborated with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) on research on employment generated through shelter programmes.

153. The Urban Basic Services Programme of the United Nations Children's Fund is closely linked to improvements in shelter and living conditions. The United Nations Environment Programme launched a joint project with the Centre in the sustainable cities programme to address a range of issues at the municipal level, including shelter and environmental services. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization has continued to implement a variety of technical cooperation projects for the industrial production of building materials in developing countries, with a strong emphasis on using local resources. In addition to its normal programme for assistance to developing countries and economies in transition, the World Bank has assisted a number of Governments in the application of the urban and housing indicators. The World Health Organization has further intensified its work on the linkages between housing and health and is collaborating with the Centre to carry out research on this issue. The United Nations Centre for Regional Development organized a series of training sessions in Asia, Africa and Latin America, covering a range of issues in human settlements, including shelter, infrastructure and disaster mitigation.

D. Action by bilateral, multilateral, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

154. Many multilateral and bilateral agencies have provided assistance to developing countries to improve housing finance mechanisms and infrastructure, as well as the building materials and construction industries. For example, the United States Agency for International Development has provided assistance to a number of countries for shelter improvement policies and programmes in many countries, including countries with economies in transition. It has also supported the efforts of several Governments in the application of the urban and housing indicators.

155. The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Government of France provided support to the Centre for the application of indicators. The Governments of Finland, France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland provided assistance to a number of countries in the application of the indicators. The Danish International Development Agency has widened its support for shelter issues through the regionalization of the community development programme, being implemented in cooperation with the Centre.

156. The Company for Habitat and Housing in Africa (Shelter-Afrique) collaborated with the Economic Commission for Africa in the production of the Continental Shelter Atlas for Africa (1996). The African Housing Fund continues to mobilize and assist poor communities in several countries in Africa to improve shelter and services and create income-generating opportunities.

157. Many local authorities are implementing local agendas 21 in which programmes for shelter and services are key components. Local authority associations around the world have formed a global body, known as the World Association of Cities and Local Authorities Coordination, to coordinate local authority activities in the implementation of global programmes and to ensure joint representation, working in partnership with the United Nations and other international organizations.

158. In Indonesia, the Real Estate Association encourages the implementation of built-in cross subsidies to lower-income housing. The Housing Development Finance Corporation of India has applied innovative mechanisms to provide lower-income families with access to market oriented finance. In the private sector, there are new initiatives being taken to provide shelter for lower-income groups.

159. The growing level of interest among non-governmental organizations in shelter and human settlements issues was demonstrated at Habitat II, with the accreditation of over 2,200 non-governmental organizations to the Conference and the participation of an additional 6,000 non-governmental participants in the non-governmental organization forum. Existing networks of non-governmental organizations were strengthened and new networks were formed, based on regions or themes, such as "Youth for Habitat".

160. The Habitat International Coalition (HIC) undertook an assessment of 34 government/non-governmental organization cooperation projects in the improvement of human settlements in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The Centre for Housing Rights and Evictions (CHORE) elaborated further the different aspects of the issue of the human right to adequate housing and, together with HIC, undertook a

review of housing rights and violations in a number of countries. Habitat for Humanity has extended its programme to assist families with improved housing in many countries in Africa.

161. The African non-governmental organization caucus, established during Habitat II, has brought together a number of key human settlement non-governmental organizations from the region and serves as a framework for national level action by non-governmental organizations. The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), with the support of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, has launched the training and advisory programme which introduces new concepts and approaches to implementing people-centred programmes in order to improve the lives and living conditions in urban slums. The Asian Coalition has also diversified its activities by establishing specific activities, such as a regional eviction watch, a housing rights programme and the Asian women and shelter programme, involving the participation of various interest groups in the region. Among the specific activities undertaken are community savings and credit programmes, programmes for strengthening community organizations, a young professionals programme, participatory research and a regional exchange programme among poor communities.

162. In Latin America, several networks of non-governmental organizations have mobilized and assisted community organizations to improve shelter and to develop new modalities for cooperation with local and national governments.

III. GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR SHELTER TO THE YEAR 2000: PROPOSED PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE BIENNIUM 1998-1999

163. The proposed plan of action for the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter during the biennium 1998-1999 is closely linked to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and is contained in the annex to the present report.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

164. From the review in chapter II above, it is clear that countries are at different stages in the implementation of their national shelter strategies. In many countries, the decision of the State to withdraw from the provision of housing and to leave it to the market to provide housing has not been accompanied by the required strengthening of the public sector's role as a facilitator. Facilitating action, such as revised legislation, institutional strengthening, reforms in land policy and new financial mechanisms for infrastructure and housing development, have proved to be difficult policy areas but there are signs that progress is being made.

165. The wide application of the urban and housing indicators is a positive trend and it has the potential to become an important policy tool. Governments, however, need to adapt the indicators to the specific needs of their countries and to increase national capacity to extend their application to all major settlements.

166. An increasing number of countries are addressing the key issues of land supply, security of tenure and housing finance but, at the global level, action is still limited.

167. Many developing countries are unable to devote the necessary resources for the provision of infrastructure to improve existing settlements and also to open up new lands for housing development.

168. The increased level of participation in the housing sector by civil society is a positive development. The growing access to information technology and the availability of information on best practices will enhance the capacity of the civil society to play a more active role.

Notes

[1] Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 8, addendum (A/43/8/Add.1).

[2] Ibid., Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 8, addendum (A/44/8/Add.1); Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 8, addendum and corrigendum (A/46/8/Add.1 and Corr.1); Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 8, addendum (A/48/8/Add.1); and Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 8, addendum (A/50/8/Add.1).

[3] A/CONF.165/14, chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[4] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 8 (A/50/8 and Corr.1-2), annex, sect. I.A.

[5] HS/C/16/INF.3.

[6] Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference, resolution 1, annex II.

ANNEX

Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000: proposed plan of action for the biennium 1998-1999

1. The Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) realized early in the preparatory process that even though many countries had revised their national shelter policies and had embarked on the process of implementation of enabling shelter strategies, the objective of adequate shelter for all could not be achieved by the year 2000 in the large majority of the developing countries. Habitat II therefore included adequate shelter for all as one of the two themes in the Habitat Agenda and formulated extensive guidelines for achieving that objective. For this reason, the proposed plan of action for the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter is brief and is designed to achieve a smooth transition from the Global Strategy for Shelter to the implementation of the shelter-related parts of the Habitat Agenda.

2. The plan of action for the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 during the biennium 1998-1999 is set out in three columns, as follows: column 1 lists action by Governments; column 2 lists action by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Human Settlements and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat); and column 3 lists action by United Nations organizations, bilateral and multilateral institutions, non-governmental organizations and other major groups and the private sector.

Table. Plan of action for the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 during the biennium 1998-1999

Member States	General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Settlements and United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)	United Nations organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations and partners
1998	1998	1998
1. Continue to strengthen the capacity of the public sector as facilitators in the implementation of the national shelter strategy within the framework of the Habitat II national plan of action and the Habitat Agenda	1. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to strengthen its support to international, regional, national and local level actions for the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter and national plans of action within the framework of the Habitat Agenda	1. The United Nations system to provide further assistance to Member States for the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter, national plans of action and the Habitat Agenda
2. Actively involve civil society in the formulation of policies and strategies for strengthening the application of the enabling strategies	2. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to strengthen the capacity of the public sector to perform more effectively as facilitators in the shelter sector and to involve civil society in this process	2. Bilateral and multilateral agencies to continue to provide assistance to relevant national agencies, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and other partners to improve their capacity for implementation and monitoring of the Global Strategy for Shelter and national plans of action
3. Apply the various urban and housing indicators, as adjusted to suit national needs, to monitor progress, to refine strategies and to select best practices	3. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to expand its indicators programme and to assist Member States to adopt indicators as necessary and to apply them widely and to select best practices	3. Partners to strengthen networks and to take an active role in the implementation and monitoring of the Global Strategy for Shelter and national plans of action
1999	1999	1999
1. Continue all three categories of action, as above	1. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to continue its action, as above	1. All actors to continue as above
	2. Commission on Human Settlements, at its seventeenth session, to review the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter and to set in motion the undertaking of a terminal review at its eighteenth session in the year 2001	
	3. The Economic and Social Council to review the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter	
	4. The General Assembly to review the sixth report of the Commission on Human Settlements and adopt a resolution to conclude the Global Strategy for Shelter in the year 2000	